



## ermine

*Mustela erminea*

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Mammalia
Order:	Mustelidae
Family:	Carnivora

## Features

The male ermine (six to nine inches long with a 2 1/4 to four inch tail) is much larger than the female (five to 7 1/2 inches long with a two to three inch tale). It is dark brown in the summer with white underparts and feet and a white line down the hind leg. It is white during winter. The tail has a black tip.

## Natural History

The ermine lives in brushy or wooded areas usually not far from water. It eats mostly small mammals (mice) and a few birds but will eat other animals. It is chiefly nocturnal but also hunts during the day. It climbs trees but is more at home on the ground. It voices a shrill shriek when agitated or seizing prey. It dens in ground burrows under stumps, rock piles, or old buildings. Fur of mice usually is found in its nest. Four to eight young are born in April or May. The gestation period is 8 1/2 to ten months.

## Habitats

bottomland forests

## Iowa Status

common; native

## Iowa Range

northern two-thirds of Iowa

## Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.